

**Judicial  
Circuit Court  
Guardian Ad Litem**

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*Seminole County*

## **Mission**

To advocate for the best interest of abused, neglected or abandoned children in judicial proceedings. The Program recruits, trains, and supervises volunteers to represent the best interest of children in civil and criminal cases.

## **Business Strategy**

The Seminole County Guardian Ad Litem Program began in 1980 as part of a pilot project to test the effectiveness of lay citizens as advocates for abused and neglected children. It developed as a result of a federal mandate known as the Child Abuse and Treatment Act. This mandate was later codified in Florida Statutes, most specifically, 39.822, Florida Statutes. This statute requires the appointment of a Guardian Ad Litem for any child suspected of being abused or neglected in any criminal or civil proceeding. Further, 61.041, Florida Statutes provides for the appointment of a Guardian Ad Litem in an action for dissolution of marriage, or modification, if the Court finds it is in the best interest of the child.

The volunteer Guardian Ad Litem is the only independent advocate for the child and has the responsibility for advancing what is in the best interest of the child. Guardians are required to gather information, act as a monitor until the Court terminates jurisdiction, assure that the child is protected throughout the proceedings, and finally make written and oral reports to the Court containing information and recommendations.

Volunteers are trained, screened and supervised by a full time professional staff. Twenty-four hours of pre-service training is provided five times a year to maintain an incoming flow of available volunteer advocates. In-service training sessions are held a minimum of ten times per year.

## **Objectives**

Maintain or increase the number of volunteers; assure quality legal representation.

Provide for increased representation of child victims in delinquency and criminal proceedings to meet the statutory mandate.

## **Performance Measures**

	<b>FY 99/00 Actual</b>	<b>FY 00/01 Estimated</b>	<b>FY 01/02 Goal</b>	<b>FY 02/03 Goal</b>
Average daily caseload	304	310	320	330
Shelter petitions filed	534	550	560	560
Dependency petitions filed	178	185	192	207
Volunteer hours	138,000	135,500	139,200	139,700
Children represented	883	892	904	920

<b>Department:</b>		<b>JUDICIAL</b>			<b>Seminole County</b>	
<b>Division:</b>		<b>CIRCUIT COURT</b>			<b>FY 2001/02</b>	
<b>Section:</b>		<b>GUARDIAN AD LITEM</b>			<b>FY 2002/03</b>	
		1999/00 Actual Expenditures	2000/01 Adopted Budget	2001/02 Adopted Budget	Percent Change 2001/02 Budget over 2000/01 Budget	Percent Change 2002/03 Budget over 2001/02 Budget
<b>EXPENDITURES:</b>						
Personal Services		24,594	27,688	30,490	10.1%	32,615 7.0%
Operating Services		18,931	33,244	27,905	-16.1%	27,920 0.1%
Capital Outlay		0	0	0		0
Debt Service		0	0	0		0
Grants and Aid		0	0	0		0
Reserves/Transfers		0	0	0		0
<b>Subtotal Operating</b>		<b>43,525</b>	<b>60,932</b>	<b>58,395</b>	<b>-4.2%</b>	<b>60,535 3.7%</b>
Capital Improvements		0	0	0		0
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>		<b>43,525</b>	<b>60,932</b>	<b>58,395</b>	<b>-4.2%</b>	<b>60,535 3.7%</b>
<b>FUNDING SOURCE (s)</b>						
General Fund		43,525	60,932	58,395	-4.2%	60,535 3.7%
<b>TOTAL FUNDING SOURCE (S)</b>		<b>43,525</b>	<b>60,932</b>	<b>58,395</b>	<b>-4.2%</b>	<b>60,535 3.7%</b>
Full Time Positions		1	1	1		1
Part-Time Positions		0	0	0		0
<b>New Programs and Highlights for Fiscal Year 2001-02</b>						
<b>New Programs and Highlights for Fiscal Year 2002-03</b>						
<b>Capital Improvements</b>		<b>2001-03</b>	<b>2003-04</b>	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2005-06</b>	<b>2006-07</b>
Total Project Cost		0	0	0	0	0
Total Operating Impact		0	0	0	0	0